

# JURNAL PEMBELAJARAN SASTRA

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Himpunan Sarjana  
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# A SOLDIER'S POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN KEVIN POWER'S THE YELLOW BIRDS

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**Abstract:** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) develops in some individuals who have real-life experience with psychological problems such as shocking, scary, or dangerous events (Davison, 2006). This paper aims at uncovering PTSD in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds* novel that underlies the behavior of the main characters, Private John Bartle. In the context of war, soldiers often face deadly situations in the middle of warfare. This experience is a kind of horrible death, such as the worst experiences that can be made these people vulnerable and psychologically affected, such as psychosis. This research discusses the causes, symptoms, and the impact of PTSD that occur to the Private John Bartle, the main character. The researcher uses the theory of post-traumatic stress disorder development by Gerald C Davison. The results of the analysis show that: (1) The main cause of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Bartle is the tragic death of his best friend on the battlefield, the adverse effects of the war occurred recently; (2) The process of re-experiencing the symptoms experienced by the main character of the novel *The Yellow Birds* began when Bartle finished his service as a service member who served in the Iraq war; (3) The effect of post-traumatic stress disorder was finally found after the post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Private John Bartle ended his deployment in the Iraq war. For further studies, it is suggested a comprehensive viewpoint in implementing this approach for the new researcher who has been engaging in related fields of post-traumatic stress disorder. *The Yellow Birds* novel by Kevin Powers can be used as an illustration of how a post-war soldier struggling with his post-traumatic stress disorder when he comes home.

**Keywords:** Kevin Power, PTSD, Psychoanalysis, *The Yellow Birds*

## INTRODUCTION

Many people have problems that are manifested in their psychological issues such as anxiety, fear, sadness, depression, that indicates the mental disorders they experience. Mental disorders are referred to as insanity, in the psychological aspect and psychosis is a disease in which mental illnesses are characterized by a deterioration of real-life mediated relationships and personalities. Atkinson states that PTSD is an essential part of mental illness. PTSD is caused mainly by traumatic events comes from the reality of human life (Atkinson, 1983).

This research will take a psychological analysis of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the main theoretical to discuss the psychological aspect of human beings. Behavior understood as the mind or mentality of individuals, which is phenomenal in related to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders (Siswantoro, 2005). The object of this study is Kevin Powers' novel *The Yellow Birds* by considering two reasons. First, this book is a best-seller based on 2012's The Guardian First Book Award and The New York Times. Second, this novel correlates with the mental situation that the soldier struggles after being deployed in the Middle East warfare. Kevin Powers' novel *The Yellow Birds* is exciting to analyze as the story reveals exactly post-traumatic postwar duties which affect many soldiers.

After having the war experience in Iraq as a machine gunner of the U.S. Army, Kevin Powers, the author, wrote the war and the risks surrounding the lives of everyone involved into his debut novel, *The Yellow Birds*. The author vividly narrated his warfare experience, completed with the psychological problems entangled in the novel. For that reason, this paper aims at uncovering PTSD that underlies the behavior of the main character, Private John Bartle. In the context of war, soldiers often faced deadly situations in the middle of warfare. The character's reaction to the state of war and their success or failure to overcome it with danger is an indication of the PTSD. The main character, Bartle struggles with the psychological consequences of his war experience many years after leaving the U.S. Army. Bartle also lost his fellow friend Daniel Murphy who died in the middle of warfare while on duty of inspecting the houses in Iraq. For him, this is a kind of horrible death, that made people vulnerable. Bartle was psychologically affected by such experience.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was caused by the decline of the Iraqi economy after the Eight-Year War with Iran in the Iran-Iraq War. Kuwait, which had an excess amount of crude oil production, then asked the United States for help to the Iraq aggression. American troops were brought to the Middle East to confront the invasion launched by Iraqi forces against Kuwait. With the approval of the U.S. President George Walter Bush, the United States declared war on Iraq by launching *Dessert storm operations* and carrying out airstrikes on Iraqi territory. The war carried out by the United States against Iraq did not end only by the attack on the Iraq territory, which aims to destroy the military power possessed by Iraq. However, in 2003, the United States invaded Iraq with the aim of "disarming Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, ending Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and liberates the Iraqi people" (Brown, 2007; Dale, 2009; Peters, 1995).

In this study, the researcher analyzed the main character, Bartle, through a psychological approach, applying the theory of post-traumatic stress disorder by Gerald C Davison (2006). The researcher chose the main character named John Bartle as he is the only main character left and suffering from PTSD when he finally gets back to the United States after the war deployment in the Iraq. Another main character, named as Michael Murphy and Sterling, are not the focus of the study. Private Daniel Murphy was an active soldier in the US Army who was killed by the insurgents in Iraq in a mutilated condition when Bartle found his dead body. Another main character named Sgt. Sterling was an active US Army soldier who served together with Bartle and Murphy as a supervisor who had the responsibilities to assure his soldiers' lives in the Iraq war, but Murphy was dead because of depression and he ended his life by shooting himself inside his car after he came back to the States.

This study aims to investigate the PTSD suffered by John Bartle in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*. The theory of post-traumatic stress disorder by Gerald Davison (2006) was applied. PTSD develops in some individuals who have real-life experience with psychological problems such as shocking, scary, or dangerous events (Davison, 2006). Gerald Davison stated that there are three types of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, such as; arousal, re-experiencing, and avoidance symptoms. And there are four causes of post-traumatic stress disorder such as; genetic causes,

environmental causes, structures, and psychological causes. And, there are three impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder; such as feeling, behavior, and mind change (Davison, 2006).

Some studies have been conducted on the novel. Walter (2016) wrote the article under the title "What it felt like Memory and the Sensations of War in Vergil's Aeneid and Kevin Powers' The Yellow Birds". In her research, she compared both novels and found a very similar pattern of the story in the novel. Those novels appear similar story about two friends who go to war together and faced with several bad experiences. The other research, from Precup (2017) with the title "Reversing Absence. The Exploration of Memory in The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers". In this research, the writer looked into the memory of traumatic events of the death of his fellow friends in the middle of the war in Iraq that happened to John Bartle after he returns to home.

The study by O'Gorman (2014) under the title "Refiguring Difference: Imaginative Geographies and "Connective Dissonance" in Three Novels of the Iraq War" aims to analyzes three novels engaging with the most Iraq war storyline: Don DeLillo's *Point Omega* (2010), Hari Kunzuru's *Gods Without Men* (2011) and Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds* (2012). The researcher argues that the novels aim to address what Judith Butler described as a dehumanizing "de-realization of loss" or "insensitivity to human misery and death" in Western media representations of the war on terror. The study by two researchers, Alosman and Raihanah (2020), with the title "Survival Psychology in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*" discussed the uncovering survival psychology, which appears to Private John Bartle and Private Daniel Murphy. Survival psychology expounds threatening situations were people's lives; the two characters in the novel are psychologically impacting when deployed on the battlefield. Bartle psychologically survived after years leaving the war and the U.S. Army, but Murphy consequently dies on his war deployment.

## METHOD

This study applies literary criticism in conducting psychoanalysis on the main character of novel *The Yellow Birds*. Literary criticism implies that the researcher is able to describe the psychological condition of the main character using Davison's theory of post-traumatic stress disorder. The researcher focused on the questions of the causes, symptoms and the impacts of PTSD suffered by the main character after the war deployments in Iraq.

According to Gerlad Davison (2006), the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder are: Brain structure cause, Genetical Cause, Psychological Cause and, Environmental Cause. And, there are three different kinds of symptoms; avoidance, arousal, and re-experiencing symptoms. Healthine (2016) says that individuals who have post-traumatic stress disorder would increase their sense of danger. It causes the sufferer at any moment or circumstance to feel nervous or anxious. This condition is caused by their damaged natural response after the occurrence of a traumatic event. The person living with post-traumatic stress disorder will decrease their anxiety disorder that occurs after witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event. (Maureen Donohue, 2016)

The increasing number of the United States war veteran who has post-traumatic stress disorder has received much attention from the public, the condition is called "battle fatigue". This condition occurs as the response to individual memories that happen because of the chemical changes inside someone's brain after experiencing threatening events. Gerald Davison (2006) states that the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder can affect the changes of people feeling, people behavior, and people mind.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **The Causes of PTSD Suffered by Private John Bartle**

The post-traumatic stress disorder are caused by several sources of traumatic conditions that have been experienced by the people who experienced traumatic events. The main cause of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Bartle is the tragic death of his best friend on the battlefield while carrying out routine patrols together.

## **Psychological Cause**

Bartle's experience of war in Iraq with so many negative things, such as destruction and death, is the cause of depression and anxiety which disrupts his mental health. Adverse experiences that have a negative impact on individuals he knows from the war in Iraq are one of the causes of Bartle's post-traumatic stress disorder. The death of Daniel Murphy when founded with mutilated bodies has caused Bartle's mental disorders which he cannot overcome in real life when he finally comes back home.

The first quotation below illustrates how Bartle is not impressed by the welcome given to him, which appreciates him as a war hero who has returned home. Instead, he felt depressed about the traumatic event he went through and wanted to end his life in order to ease his memory of the traumatic events experienced by his friends.

*Where is all this fucking trash coming from? and even back home you're getting whiffs of it and then that thing you started to notice slipping away is gone and now it's becoming inverted, like you have bottomed out in your spirit but yet a deeper hole is being dug because everybody is so fucking happy to see you, the murderer, the fucking accomplice, the at-bare-minimum bearer of some fucking responsibility, and everyone wants to slap you on the back and you start to want to burn the whole goddamn country down, you want to burn every goddamn yellow ribbon in sight, and you can't explain it but it's just, like, Fuck you, but then you signed up to go so it's all your fault, really, because you went on purpose, so you are in the end doubly fucked, so why not just find a spot and curl up and die and let's make it as painless as possible because you are a coward and, really, cowardice got you into this mess because you wanted to be a man and people made fun of you and pushed you around in the cafeteria and the hallways in high school because you liked to read books and poems sometimes and they'd call you fag and really deep down you know you went because you wanted to be a man and that's never gonna happen now and you're too much of a coward to be a man and get it over with so why not find a clean, dry place and wait it out with it hurting as little as possible and just wait to go to sleep and not wake up and fuck 'em all. (p. 149)*

The quotation above described how depressed Bartle felt because of people's over perceptions of him. The people thought that Bartle is a battlefield hero, as he has served to protect his country in the Iraq war. However, Bartle considers himself to be the cause of the death of his friend named Daniel Murphy because he was not able to keep Murph alive. The psychological impact of multiple unpleasant experiences during the war in Iraq led Bartle to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder when he was no longer serving as a soldier. His depression also blinded his senses of life and wanted to end his life as a way to relieve the burden in his psychological condition.

The second quotation below shows how clearly the anxiety in Bartle's psychological state as a result of the war that killed many of his fellow soldiers.

*I looked at the battalion scattered throughout the plane. How many didn't make it? Murph. Three specialists from Bravo company who'd been killed by a suicide bomber in the chow hall. A few others scattered over the year. One from HQ company killed by a mortar on the FOB. Another I didn't know but had heard was killed by a sniper. Ten more? Twenty? (p. 105)*

The post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Bartle in the quotation above was caused by his anxiety about the devastating consequences of war that occurred so far in Iraq. Bartle began to realize amounts of damage caused by the war he was experiencing, as well as the number of deaths of his friends, which seemed to be evidence of the devastating effects of the war. Although Bartle was not specifically as the victim of the devastating war, he experienced, but the bad experiences of the death of his friends had affected his psychological health, which had caused his post-traumatic stress disorder to suffer.

## **Environmental Cause**

As a soldier assigned in Iraq war, Bartle's often has to face many unexpected, frightening moments. This moment indirectly results in a traumatic condition that will bring many adverse

effects on the psychological health of the soldiers. To someone who loses their friends in the middle of warfare, it is hard for them to forget that memory.

The quotation below reveals Bartle's concern about the effects of the war that caused many American soldiers killed in the Iraq war.

*The ghosts of the dead filled the empty seats of every gate I passed: boys destroyed by mortars and rockets and bullets and IEDs to the point that when we tried to get them to a medevac, the skin slid off, or limbs barely held in place detached, and I thought that they were young and had girls at home or some dream that they thought would make their lives important. They had been wrong of course. You don't dream when you are dead. I dream. The living dream, though I won't say thanks for that. (p. 107)*

Bartle already had post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the death of several American soldiers while serving on the battlefield. He has seen a lot of traumatic events about the death of fellow American soldiers, who eventually had to leave a feeling of emotional pain to the people they loved because of the war that killed many American soldiers. Bartle imagined how their parents and family would suffer when they had to accept the harsh reality that their beloved family member has to end their lives forever. The above events also give a negative impact on the psychological condition of a soldier who still has the opportunity to live a life that ends up suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder in their social life. The impact of the traumatic event that has passed will be difficult to him to cure because those who have post-traumatic stress disorder will experience unpleasant memories about the soldiers who are dying in the middle of the war zone and die forever as the victims caused by the war conflict.

The quotation below described the situation when Bartle found the dead body of his best friend Murphy in terrifying condition. He started to realize that war is seriously cruel for him, and the death of Murphy's is unacceptable. This frightening experience also has an impact on his psychological condition, which now he has post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the death of his friend.

*We pulled Murph free from the tangle of brush and laid him out in some shadow of respectability. We stood and looked him over. He was broken and bruised and cut and still pale except for his face and hands, and now his eyes had been gouged out, the two hollow sockets looking like red angry passages to his mind. His throat had been cut nearly through, his head hung limply and lolled from side to side, attached only by the barely intact vertebrae. We dragged him like a shot deer out of a wood line, trying but failing to keep his naked body from banging against the hard ground and bouncing in a way that would be forever burned into our memories. His ears were cut off. His nose cut off, too. He had been imprecisely castrated. (p. 203)*

The quote above describes Bartle confronting the terrifying situation of the dead body he found. At first, when they discovered Murph's dead bodies, Bartle and his Sergeant could not clearly remember him. Murph body was incomplete, and he was found with a naked condition, this condition is tragic and unacceptable to them, they cannot believe their friends are dead with the unnatural shape. This frightening condition is leading the post-traumatic stress disorder to Bartle, especially when the times he came home. Bartle was a good friend of Murph while on the battlefield, so when he found Murphy's bodies incomplete, he was feeling very guilty to the worst Murph's condition. Bartle was upset to himself and regretted his decision when he floats Murph's bodies to the river, and he was overthinking to the death of Daniel Murphy.

### **The Symptoms of PTSD Suffered by Private John Bartle**

The symptoms appear when John Bartle comes back home to the United States. Private John Bartle served with the U.S. Army in Iraq war, and he lost his best friend in the middle of patrol in Iraq. His friend Murph was kidnapped by the insurgent and found in a mutilation dead body. Bartle was felt responsible for the death of his best friend, and he also made a promise to the Murph mothers before the deployment to the Iraq war that he would take care of her son and promised to bring him back alive to the United States. Bartle and his Sergeant, who was found the dead body of Murph, finally swept Murph's body away to the river in Iraq with any consideration. This traumatic event affected Bartle psychological condition, and he showed several symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder when he came back to the states.

## Avoidance

People who have undergone trauma will stop trying to convince him or herself of the traumatic event. Individuals with a post-traumatic stress disorder attempt to avoid circumstances that provoke traumatic event memories. Avoidance symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are an action to withdraw from certain situations that result in the body-level anxiety of traumatic experience related symptoms. People can also see these symptoms as activities that individuals are engaged in to reduce other kinds of frightening experiences. For example, the use of alcohol or other medications may be a behavior that someone did in self-medication of nervous feelings. The person with PTSD also could avoid going to the places where the trauma occurred. They might avoid other sights, sounds, smells, or people that are reminders of the traumatic event.

This condition has appeared in the Private John Bartle. The avoidance symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in Bartle's personality have appeared when he finally at home after his deployment from the Iraq war has ended. In this quotation, Bartle tries to avoid his family by leaving his house as the action of avoidance symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder he suffering.

*Late August. I left my mother's house. I'd developed the habit of taking long, aimless walks to fill the days. I woke one morning in a small room off the kitchen in my single bed wishing that I hadn't. It wasn't the first time. I was tired of my mind running all night through the things I remembered, then through things I did not remember but for which I blamed myself on account of the sheer vividness of scenes that looped on the red-green linings of my closed eyelids. I could not tell what was true and what I had invented but I wanted it to stop, to leave it and have my perception drift away like a burned-up fog. (p. 137)*

The symptom of avoidance makes a person who has experienced a trauma more aware and tries to avoid any incidents that can cause a particular trauma experience as before. Here Bartle provides an example of how the memory of the past death incident that happened to Murph oppressed him. With the amount of pressure experienced in his psychological state and mind, this situation made him decide to leave the house by walking away without any specific reason. This new habit that he did was intended as a form of escaping and a quest for composure that he did not get at home. He thought that by avoiding the environment that he is living in will relieve his bad memories about Murphy's death. He seems so tired of his mind, which he remembers the traumatic events he had been assigned to since the Iraq war. What he wants is a healthy state of mind which will make his life more comfortable.

The other example of Bartle's decision to avoid the post-traumatic stress disorder, is by isolating himself society and to find serenity on his psychological condition.

*I put my pants on and I went out onto the back porch and spit over the handrail, and it was a yellowish brown, and my body pulsed with a warm obtuse ache from my eyelids to my fingertips. The ache was inside my body too, an all-encompassing type of pain like my whole skin was made out of a fat lip. I lit a cigarette and went down to the pond behind her house, the light all bright and shimmery like raw linen in the dense summer air, then farther back into the woods where the pond drained into a creek and ran between steeply gouged-out red-clay banks. At a spot where the creek caught up and swirled and eddied between exposed rocks, I found a place I'd often come to as a child. (p. 139)*

Previously, Bartle's mother got a phone call from his childhood friend. They invited Bartle to vacation together to the river they often visited when they were children, as a celebration of Bartle's return from war. Knowing the invitation from his friends, Bartle did not even feel happy enough to go to the river with his friends. He decided to go away from his house and stay away from his neighborhood because he was not ready to be able to get along with people in the neighborhood. Bartle has just returned from the war deployment, and many of the traumatic experiences he has encountered, including the death of Daniel Murphy, is very traumatic to him. Here Bartle shows the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder by avoiding the people closest to him because he cannot be separated from the traumatic memory he had experienced in Iraq.

## Re-experiencing Symptom

As the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) concept and term, people who have experienced trauma will never forget the traumatic events, and it will always shadow their lives when confronted with the situation or conversation that related to traumatic events. Even he or she did not want to remember the traumatic event, the memories of trauma will appear when triggered by any kind of situation that reminds them of traumatic events.

The process of re-experiencing the symptoms by the main character of the novel *The Yellow Birds* began when Bartle finished his service as a service member who served in the Iraq war. He was confronted with numerous kinds of traumatic events and the death of his friend Daniel Murphy, who had made him suffer from PTSD. Re-experiencing symptoms can cause trouble in a person's daily life. This symptom develops inside human's feelings and thoughts. Terms, things, or circumstances in the past that are reminiscent of an occurrence can often cause re-experiencing symptoms. The sufferer's physical and emotional reactions may result from the remembrance of traumatic events. Such memories can often feel so realistic that it is as though the traumatic experience is happening again; this is named as "flashback" moment.

The first re-experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder began to appear when Bartle was no longer serving as a soldier. A strange feeling occurred in his post-war personality, which also reminds him of the traumatic experience he had during his assignment to the Iraq war, which further aggravated his mental health due to the memory of the traumatic moments that had continued to appear.

*It wasn't long after I left Al Tafar that I began to feel very strange. I first noticed it on the highway between the air base and the town of Kaiserslautern. The trees outside the window of the taxi made a silver blur, but I could clearly see the green buds of spring as they untethered themselves from the remains of winter. It reminded me of the war, though I was only a week removed from it, and unbeknownst to me at the time, my memories would seem closer the farther I got from the circumstances that gave birth to them. I suppose, now, that they grew the same way other things grow. In the quiet of the taxi, the thin trees made me think of the war and how in the desert our year seemed like a seasonless thing, except in fall. There was a sharp disquiet in the way days passed into other days and the dust covered everything in Al Tafar, so that even the blooming hyacinth flowers became a kind of rumor. (p. 57)*

In the quotation above, Bartle has a hard time to forget his experience about the Iraq war, in which the memories of deployments in the Iraq war have given him a negative impact on his life. He becomes easily to re-experience the traumatic event that he got in war deployment before. Even though he was far away from Iraq and living in a more comfortable environment like in Germany, he still suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder that ruined his life as a human being. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that appear in Bartle will make it very difficult for him to focus and to adapt to the new environment that is very different from the war situation in its path. A soldier who has traumatic events when serving in a war will feel like a stranger in the middle of society when they have to adapt to the normal life around him. His memory of the war situation seemed to present itself, and this was referred to as re-experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in the psychological aspect.

When he arrived in Germany, Bartle tried to adjust to the social environment. Something unusual was discovered after the war. Occasionally, he remembered the death of many individuals results in the conflict that had occurred recently.

*Murph himself had told me that, as we stood over a field of worn and pale bodies scattered in the sun like driftwood. "If it ain't against the rules, it's mandatory," he'd muttered, mostly under his breath. He wasn't really talking to anyone in particular that day. He wasn't talking very much at all then, so I listened carefully when he did. I often thought about what he'd meant from that day on and it wasn't until I stood in front of the house with the light coming through the curtains that I understood. People have always done this, I thought. They looked for a curved road around the plain truth of it: an undetermined future, no destiny, no veined hand reaching into our lives, just what happened and our watching it. Knowing this was not enough, and I struggled to make it meaningful, as they had perhaps done here in Germany many years ago, looking for some pattern in all the strange things that occurred, covering their faces with ashes and pigments from berries they'd*

*gathered from thawed valleys in spring, standing over the bodies of boys or women or old men covered by leaves or grasses ready to be lit beneath the stones that would hold them down in case the fires and the heat and the noise of the burning woke them from their strange sleep. (p. 69)*

Bartle seemed to re-experience the conversation he had with Murphy before he died. He recalled how Murphy was a person who was not easy to get along with strangers. When serving in Iraq together all Murphy had at that time was Bartle, the friend of him who always treated him very pleasant. The friendship they built is more like a brother who has responsibilities each other. This closed relationship between them made Bartle seem incapable of forgetting the friendship they had formed before. Bartle frequently re-experiences what life experiences they have encountered together. However, Bartle has not quite realized that Murphy's memory would harm his mental state, and that will develop post-traumatic stress disorder in his life.

### **The Impact of PTSD Suffered by Private John Bartle**

The researcher will focus on exploring the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Private John Bartle in Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*. The effect of post-traumatic stress disorder was because of his traumatic event and affected his psychological condition disorder. The impacts were finally found after the researcher understanding the cause and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Private John Bartle. In this part, the researcher will be focusing on the impacts that appeared by Private John Bartle.

#### **Behavior Change**

The impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on Bartle's behavior change has a very significant impact on his mental condition. The behavior change in Bartle's mental disorder appeared when he came back to the states after his deployment as a U.S. Army soldier in Iraq. This condition was led by several bad experiences that happen in Iraq; the memory of those traumatic events regularly change Bartle's behavior, even when Bartle is in a new environment that clearly can bring him to a peaceful condition to his mentality.

The impact of the traumatic experience he had in the past has a significant impact on the behavioral change, as mentioned below.

*It made me feel fine to be walking alone in the rain that day, alongside the tall, ordered rows of pines and birches, and I began to feel a kind of calm when I passed the townspeople. I couldn't have placed it then, but now, looking back, there was peace in the absence of talk. We passed, and our eyes would meet briefly, the sound of my boot heels amplified by cobblestones or alley walls. Then they would fall away from one another, our eyes, and they would know me by my skin, tan and sun-beat to linen, an American, no reason to speak, he will not understand the words, and I thought, Thank you, I am tired and do not know what to say. (p. 59)*

When he arrived in Germany for the transit of his flight, Bartle decided to walk alone on a rainy day. He felt depressed, and it was disconcerting to him because he could not figure out how the burden of it all could be eased. During the rainy day, as he walked alone, he felt the peace that had come in his life. When remembering Murphy's death, Bartle chose solitude as an attempt to escape his memories which gave him a traumatic impact. The peaceful state he felt did not go last long, the memory of the traumatic events he experienced seemed always to haunt his mind, and it was hard for him to vent what he experienced so far. The impact of this post-traumatic stress disorder makes him avoid the environment that has the potential to be able to worsen the disorder in his current psychological condition.

#### **Change of Feeling**

Post-traumatic stress disorder has impacted the change of John Bartle's feelings. The change feeling appeared in Bartle's mentality, such as quickly being sad and depressed. This condition is a negative impact of being a soldier who had traumatic memories while deployed on the battlefield. Although Bartle has a peaceful environment to live when he came home, the history of traumatic events in the Iraq war still follows him and makes his feelings change.

Although the surrounding situation was in regular and friendly situations, Bartle's memories of the war seemed unable to fade away from his mind quickly and caused him uncomfortable with the social circumstances near him.

*The earth was pocked with blue pools, the brown squares of ball fields and mazes of houses arrayed like strange reproductions of themselves. And green. It was impossibly green. There seemed to be trees growing out of every inch of the land. It was spring and some bloomed and from this height even the blooms were green and it was so green that I would have jumped from the plane if I could have, to float over that green briefly, to let it be real and whole and as large as I imagined. And as I thought of my descent, how I would take in that last breath of green before I scattered over the earth, I remembered the last word—home. I want to go home. (p. 107)*

The feeling that he has is changing, and when he is on the plane and gets through some beautiful scenery in the downside, he wants to jump off the plane and enjoys the natural beauty that he desired much, which he cannot find in the warfare. The war has changed most of the thoughts and feelings he has. What has been in his feelings to date is just the memory of the tragic death that befall those around him and give him another nightmare live. He seemed accustomed to the sound of explosions from mortars raining down on his position and the sound of gunfire that seemed endless. The experience of war had a very drastic impact on the change in the feelings he had. The change of his feeling was due to the traumatic condition he had gone while serving in the Iraq war. These adverse experiences seemed to leave a mental state that eventually felt the pain of post-traumatic stress disorder.

### Mind Change

The war harmed Bartle's mind. Changes in his mind give him the adverse effects that affect his mind like often remembering the traumatic events that have been experienced before. Even though the person with this post-traumatic stress disorder lives far away from the place where his bad experience occurred, his mind seems to be still on the spot where the unfortunate event occurred.

The quotation explains how Bartle's mind changes. His memory of the war could not escape from his mind. The change in Bartle's feeling appears when he feels odd to be in a peaceful social environment and away from the actual war, such as in the Iraq war.

*We rode in silence, without pleasantries, and the radio stayed off. I leaned my head against the window and watched as my breath condensed on it. I took my finger and made rudimentary lines in the fogged-over glass; first one, then another, until I had made the shape of a square, a smaller window inside the window. As I looked out onto the trees that edged the road, my muscles tensed and I began to sweat. I knew where I was: a road in Germany, AWOL, waiting for the flight back to the States. But my body did not: a road, the edge of it, and another day. My fingers closed around a rifle that was not there. I told them the rifle was not supposed to be there, but my fingers would not listen, and they kept closing around the space where my rifle was supposed to be and I continued to sweat and my heart was beating much faster than I thought reasonable. (p. 59)*

The changes in his mind appeared when he decided to use a cab for his mini-tour in Germany. He felt a change in his mind immediately and re-experience the battlefield conditions in the Iraq war. Bartle seemed unable to release his memory from the war situation he had gone through, even though he was in a peaceful environment around him. Bartle always seems to be in an awareness of the condition from all threats as if he were holding a weapon that he did not actually carry. In this condition, a post-war soldier goes through phases to remember the state of war that has been passed. The change of mind felt by him was the part impact of post-traumatic stress disorder which was often faced by war veterans after he is back into the social world.

### CONCLUSION

Post-traumatic stress disorder or commonly called as PTSD is presented in Kevin Powers' novel *The Yellow Birds*, through the John Bartle, the main character. The causes of Bartle's post-traumatic stress disorder are his traumatic experiences in the Iraq war and his closed friend's death in terrible unnatural condition. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in Bartle's psychological condition is shown by his re-experience of his traumatic experience and avoidance of

surrounding. The impacts of post-traumatic disorder in Bartle's psychological condition, is shown into three changes in his behavior, feeling, and his mind.

The findings of this study show that war experience is the most traumatic one for the soldiers. They might be dead in the war field, or return home safe physically. However, even those who return home safely, most of them had a post-traumatic stress disorder because of the terrible traumatic experiences in the war field. As suggested by the theories on PTSD, the psychological disorder happen to the soldiers like Private John Bartle, is the case that is important to be taken care by the Army institutionally.

The study on literary works provides more space to discuss many traumatic experiences that occur to people in many situations. This needs to be studied further, since such study contributes to the resilience of humanities in dealing with many traumatic experiences.

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